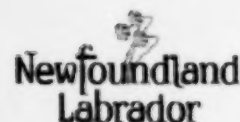


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Education

May 21, 2008

New Lab Equipment Prepares Students for Success

New laboratory equipment came under the microscope today as the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education, toured a chemistry lab at O'Donel High School in Mount Pearl. The Provincial Government has invested \$3.85 million over the past two years in a lab safety initiative and Minister Burke saw firsthand how students and teachers are making use of the new equipment that has been sent to all 280 schools in the province.

"Our lab safety initiative is designed to bring our science facilities into the 21st century," said Minister Burke. "It is important that students have the very best equipment, both to ensure their safety when working in the labs, and to provide them with the most authentic science experiences possible. With the new equipment in place, students can do advanced, hands-on experiments, and teachers will know they are using the most modern and safest equipment available."

Approximately \$1.75 million of science equipment have been sent to the schools. Everything from digital weather stations and fume hoods, to drench showers and sky-viewing telescopes has been provided. At least one teacher in every high school offering the science curriculum has attended a two-day training session on lab safety.

Funding has also been directed to the development of a new science manual and training provided to support teachers working with the new equipment. The reference manual offers guidelines for safe science practice and activities, and reflects teachers' views on what they wanted to see included.

The lab safety initiative has also resulted in the removal of old, outdated, or unwanted chemicals. At a cost of approximately \$250,000, this process saw the safe removal of more than 10,000 litres of unwanted chemicals from schools.

Minister Burke noted that in recent years, the education budget has seen a steady increase, with an additional \$70 million allocated this year. With this increased funding, the Provincial Government is supporting a range of initiatives, programs and learning resources. These resources include skilled trades equipment similar to that used on jobsites, physical education equipment that appeals to all students, and more than 1,450 new computers for schools.

"We are very proud of the modern resources we have introduced to support new curriculum," said Minister Burke. "We've heard from science teachers that for the first time in a long time, they are able to do more authentic science activities that mimic what scientists do. They are secure in the knowledge that the students are performing experiments in a safe setting with proper equipment. These initiatives build the groundwork for our students' post-secondary training, and for success in their chosen careers as well."

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BACKGROUNDER

Improvements to Science Labs in the K-12 Education System

Every school in the province that offers any intermediate or high school science curriculum received the following safety equipment:

- Safety blanket
- Lab Coats (mixed sizes)
- Safety goggles
- Safety glasses
- Sterilizer cabinet
- Safety shower tester
- Heat resistant gloves
- Emergency first aid kit
- Hotplates
- Alcohol thermometers
- Chemical resistant gloves
- Variety of laboratory-grade glassware
- Safety step stools
- Safe storage chemical conversion kits

Intermediate and high schools received the following science equipment:

- Low voltage power supplies (high schools)
- Spectrum tube and power supply (high schools)
- Digital multimetres
- Digital weather station (Grades 6 – 12)
- Population sample survey (high schools)
- Overhead flow table
- Sky-viewing telescope (Grades 6 – 12)
- Electricity and circuit testing kit

The following infrastructure improvements are being made for intermediate and high schools:

- Eye wash stations
- Safety/drench showers
- Fume hood

Every primary and elementary school has received the following equipment:

- Hotplates
- Tuning fork set (Grade 4)
- Hand-held microscopes (Grade 6)
- Polypropylene beakers and measuring cylinders
- Pulley investigation set
- Rock tumbler kit
- Magnet kit
- Electric circuit kit

- Illuminated magnifier
- Thermometers
- Sky-viewing telescope
- Weather station

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